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State to recommend water system improvement projects

\$38 million in economic stimulus funds on way to Washington

OLYMPIA – Today the Washington State Department of Health released a draft list of water system projects that it recommends for federal stimulus funds.

The department is overseeing more than \$38 million in federal economic stimulus money to be used for water system improvements such as covering or repairing reservoirs to keep water clean and building treatment facilities to improve water quality.

“It is vital that our state makes smart, quick decisions that put the federal stimulus money — and people in need of jobs — to work right away,” Gov. Chris Gregoire said. “Safe drinking water is fundamental to our health. These projects will assure water quality and build our economy by putting people to work in some of our hardest-hit areas.”

The department has published a list recommending funding for 27 projects in 16 counties. The proposed projects must still receive final approval from the state Public Works Board. Criteria for selection include an ability to start the project within 12 months, economic need and public health benefit.

The state received 347 applications for projects totaling nearly \$416 million, which is 10 times as much as the total available funding.

“While the \$38 million doesn’t cover the full need, it lets us give a boost to much-needed projects that have been held up due to lack of funding,” said Gregg Grunenfelder, assistant secretary for DOH. “Nearly all of the applications we received meet the criteria set by the federal government for this funding. That shows just how much this work is needed.”

Over the next two weeks, DOH will take public comment on the draft proposal list. Projects that can begin by June 16, 2009, receive first consideration. At least half of the funding won't be repaid — these funds are for communities that cannot afford a loan.

DOH is accepting written comments until 5 p.m., April 6. The Public Works Board will meet April 7 to consider the list of recommended projects and provide final approval. To submit comments, send letters or e-mail to:

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To see the draft list of ranked-order projects, visit:
www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/dwsrf.htm.

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Washington state is administering American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investments with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability. Gov. Gregoire created a Web site, www.recovery.wa.gov, so every Washingtonian can see how tax dollars are spent and hold government accountable for results. On the federal level, President Obama has appointed Vice President Biden to oversee all states' recovery efforts and to root out waste and fraud. This combined oversight will ensure taxpayer dollars are put to good use and recharge the economy.